



## Cultural Competency Series

### Framework for Cross-Cultural Health Care

#### Tip:

A suggested framework for cross-cultural patient-clinician interactions can be remembered with the simple mnemonic **LEARN**.

**Listen** to what patients say with **sympathy and understanding**. Listen to the patient's perception of the problem **without imposing values** that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of other cultures or ethnic groups. Arthur Kleinman's explanatory model for illness can serve as a guide:

1. *What do you call your problem? What name does it have?*
2. *What do you think has caused your problem?*
3. *Why do you think it started when it did?*
4. *What does your sickness do to you? How does it work?*
5. *How severe is it? Do you think your problem will be here for a short time or a long time?*
6. *What do you fear most about your sickness?*
7. *What are the chief problems your sickness has caused for you?*
8. *What kind of treatment do you think you should receive? What are the most important results you hope to receive from treatment?*

**Explain** your perceptions of the problem and **Empathize** by understanding that the perception of illness and disease and its causes varies by culture.

**Acknowledge** and discuss the differences and similarities and recognize that culture influences help-seeking behaviors and attitudes toward health care providers.

**Recommend** treatments that respect individual preferences and are based on an integrated approach to care.

**Negotiate** agreement and **Navigate** through complicated health care delivery systems with and on behalf of patients.

**NOTE:** *LEARN only works when you are able to communicate with the patient. Federal law stipulates the critical importance of accommodating persons with limited English proficiency in health care settings. You may need to learn to work with an interpreter. Accurate communication is the foundation of proper diagnosis and treatment.*

## References and Resources

- Berlin, E.A. and Fowkes, W.C., *A Teaching Framework for Cross-Cultural Health Care*. The Western Journal of Medicine 1983, 139:934–938.
- Cross Cultural Health Care Program, Seattle WA, (206) 621-4479; [www.xculture.org](http://www.xculture.org).
- Galanti, Geri-Ann, *Caring for Patients from Different Cultures: Case Studies from American Hospitals*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2nd edition, 1997.
- Geissler, Elaine, *Mosby's Pocket Guide Series: Cultural Assessment*. 2nd Ed., St. Louis, 1998.
- Kleinman, A. (1988). *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition* (This must be included as the 8 questions under "Listen" of the LEARN mnemonic are from this source).
- National Alliance for Hispanic Health has many resources at [www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org).
- National Center for Cultural Competence, *Policy Brief 2: Linguistic Competence in Primary Health Care Delivery Systems: Implications for Policy Makers*, 2003 and other resources at [www.georgetown.edu/research/gucdc/nccc/products.html](http://www.georgetown.edu/research/gucdc/nccc/products.html).
- Office of Minority Health Clearinghouse, National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health Care. Office of Minority Health, 2000. Contact (800) 444-6472 or [www.omhrc.gov/clas](http://www.omhrc.gov/clas).
- Perkins, J., Yudelma, M., Wong, D. (2003) *Ensuring Linguistic Access in Health Care Settings: Legal Rights & Responsibilities*. [www.healthlaw.org](http://www.healthlaw.org)



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